

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 EAE-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4579

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CINCPAC

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1. SHORTLY AFTER NOON TODAY, DECEMBER 19, BLUE HOUSE SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCED THAT PRESIDENT PARK HAD REQUESTED RESIGNATIONS OF PRIME MINISTER KIM CHONG-PIL AND NINETEEN CABINET MEMBERS ACTUALLY SUBMITTED TO HIM EARLIER IN MORNING. SPOKESMAN SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED NAMES OF NINE NEW APPOINTMENTS TO CABINET BY THE PRESENT, THEY ARE:

PRIME MINISTER

KIM CHONG-PIL REPLACED BY CHOE KYU-HA.

KIM CHONG-PIL ANNOUNCED THAT HE WAS RESIGNING FOR HEALTH REASONS AND EXPECTED TO TAKE LONG VACATION TO RECOVER HIS HEALTH. CHOE IS CURRENTLY SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO PRESIDENT FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS. CHOE WILL BE ACTING PRIME MINISTER UNTIL CONFIRMED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHICH HAS JUST ADJOURNED.

MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS:

KIM TONG-CHO REPLACED BY PAK TONG-CHIN, CURRENTLY KOREAN
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AMBASSADOR TO UN.

MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS:

PAK KYONG-WON REPLACED BY KIM CHI-YOL WHO WAS FORMERLY DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF KCIA AND CURRENTLY SERVES AS PROSECUTOR GENERAL.

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES:

CHANG SO-YANG REPLACED BY CHOE KAK-KYU, CURRENTLY VICE MINISTER, ECONOMIC PLANNING BOARD.

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS:

KO CHOE-PIL REPLACED BY SIN KYON-HWAK, DRP MEMBER OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS:

CHANG SUNG-TAE REPLACED BY PAK WON-KUN; NOW SERVING AS SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS, PAK IS FORMER ARMY LT. GEN. AND DIRECTOR JCS.

MINISTER OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION:

YI WON-KYONG REPLACED BY KIM SONG-CHIN, UNTIL NOW SENIOR PRESS SECRETARY FOR BLUE HOUSE.

FIRST MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO:

YI PYONG-HUI REPLACED BY SIN HUNG-SIK, DRP ASSEMBLYMAN AND CHAIRMAN OF FINANCE COMMITTEE.

SECOND MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO:

KU TAE-HOE REPLACED BY MIN PYONG-KWON, CURRENTLY YUCHONGHOE ASSEMBLYMAN.

2. OTHER ELEVEN CABINET MEMBERS WERE REAPPOINTED BY PRESIDENT TO THEIR POSITIONS AND REMAIN UNCHANGED.

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3. FOLLOWING SUB-CABINET LEVEL CHANGES ALSO ANNOUNCED BY BLUE HOUSE: CHANG CHIN-U SEC GEN OFFICE OF AUDIT AND INSPECTION WAS NAMED TO REPLACE YI SON-CHUNG AS DIRECTOR OFFICE OF LEGISLATION. YI SON-CHUNG MOVES TO OFFICE OF PROSECUTOR GENERAL. YIM PANG-KYON CURRENT SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO PRESIDENT FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS MOVES INTO POSITION AS BLUE HOUSE SENIOR PRESS SECRETARY TO REPLACE KIM SONG-CHIN, NEWLY NAMED TO BE MINISTER OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION.

4. COMMENT: CABINET CHANGES REPRESENT FURTHER CONSOLIDATION PRESIDENT PARK'S CONTROL OVER GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES RATHER THAN ANY POLICY CHANGES. REPLACEMENT OF STRONG POLITICAL FIGURE KIM CHONG-PIL BY CHOE WHO UNIMPRESSIVE AND VERY CONSERVATIVE BLUE HOUSE LOYALIST AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPECIALIST, IN TOP CABINET POST IS LEADING INDICATOR OF THIS. MOVEMENT OF TWO OTHER SENIOR BLUE HOUSE ASSISTANTS ALONG WITH SEVERAL LOYAL ASSEMBLYMEN INTO CABINET IS A FURTHER INDICATOR. NONE OF NEW MEN ARE SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL FIGURES IN OWN RIGHT. MOST, WITH NOTABLE EXCEPTION NEW PRIMIN, APPEAR TO BE TECHNICALLY PROFICIENT AND ABLE. NEW FOREIGN MINISTER PARK WHO HAS REPUTATION AS, EXPERIENCED, ABLE, AND AFFABLE DIPLOMAT, LOYAL TO PARK, LIKELY TO BRING UPLIFT TO MOFA, PARTICULARLY IN UN MATTERS WHERE PARK HAS MUCH EXPERIENCE.

5. CABINET SHIFT ALSO APPEARS TO BE RESPONSE TO GENERAL MOOD FOR AND EXPECTATION OF CHANGE. SEVERAL SOURCES, HAVE NOTED EXPECTANT CLIMATE IN RECENT WEEKS ALONG WITH SPECULATIONS ABOUT POSSIBLE NEW APPOINTMENTS. MOFA OFFICIALS DISCUSSING SUBJECT WITH POLCOUNS AFTER ANNOUNCEMENT SHARED OPINION THAT PRESIDENT WAS RESPONDING TO PUBLIC MOOD FAVORING CHANGE.

6. ACTUAL TIMING OF ANNOUNCEMENT CAME AS SURPRISE TO LOCAL OBSERVERS IN THAT JANUARY AND FEBRUARY PERIOD HAD BEEN MOOTED AS MOST LOGICAL, SINCE IT COINCIDED WITH YUCHONGHOE APPOINTMENTS. IN RETROSPECT TIMING REFLECTS TYPICAL PARK TACTIC ANTICIPATING EXPECTATIONS; PRESIDENT HAS SHREWDLY CHOSEN BEGINNING OF TRADITIONALLY QUIET SEASON AFTER NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAS ADJOURNED AS MOST PROPITIOUS TIME FOR CHANGE.

7. AT MOMENT, FINAL DISPOSITION OF DISPLACED CABINET MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY KIM CHONG-PIL, REMAINS A BLUE HOUSE SECRET. ALSO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN QUESTION IS JOB SECURITY OF KCIA DIRECTOR SIN CHIK-SU, WHO SUBMITTED RESIGNATION ALONG WITH OTHERS BUT WHOSE FUTURE UNDECIDED. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SPEAKER CHONG IL-KWON'S FUTURE JOB SECURITY HAS ALSO BEEN WIDELY RUMORED AS PROBLEMATIC. FORMER PRESIDENTIAL PROTECTIVE FORCE CHIEF, PAK CHONG-KYU, WHO HAS BEEN WAITING IN WINGS, COULD REAPPEAR IN SOME ROLE. THUS, IT SEEMS QUITE POSSIBLE MORE CHANGES MAY BE IN OFFING.

8. BIO DATA ON NEW APPOINTEES WILL FOLLOW.
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